

REPORT OF THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Throughout the year, the Commission reviews, conducts site field inspections and provides comments and recommendations on Alton Wetlands Permit Applications to the NH Wetlands Bureau. In 2005, we reviewed a total of 94 applications. The included 44 Standard Dredge & Fill's, 12 Minimum Impact Expedited, and 28 Permit By Notification's, which include Seasonal Dock and Road Notifications. This year we saw an increase in applicants coming before the Commission to present and discuss project proposals. The Commission also investigated a number of complaints regarding wetlands violations and if necessary, filed formal complaints with NH Department of Environmental Services.

The Commission continues to work closely with the Planning Board regarding environmental impacts of proposed projects. Commissioners inspected many sites for proposed subdivisions and site plans and offered comments and recommendations to the Alton Planning Board. Commissioners David Lawrence and Earl Bagley served on Master Plan Update Committees, along with Tom Hoopes, who is also the Planning Board Chairman.

The Commission provides annual funding for Lay Lake Monitoring of Lake Winnepesaukee, Half Moon Lake, and the Merrymeeting Rover. This monitoring provides data to assess water quality of these important water bodies.

The Commission is responsible for managing and monitoring the Alton Town Forest and Alton's conservation land, currently totaling nearly 800 acres. Both the Town Forest and Gilman Pond Conservation have walking trails available to the public (no motorized vehicles). Fishing is permitted at Gilman Pond (no motors).

In 2005, the Commission received two new conservation easements for the Town of Alton at no cost to the town. These new protected areas were established under state and federal regulations to mitigate wetlands impacts for two local construction projects. The first, Prospect Mountain High School (PMHS) Easement, is composed of 5 tracts of wetlands and uplands, a total of approximately 22 acres. The PMHS Easement, which abuts the high school complex, provides open space around the high school and will be available for high school environmental studies.

The second parcel, the Hussey Conservation Easement, is a 56-acre tract abutting Route 28 near the Hussey gravel pit. The easement, created to mitigate wetlands impacts for the new Hannaford's grocery store construction, protects a very large wetland area and Coffin Brook, which flows through the wetland. The protected land lies between the 86-acre Barbarossa/Jackson Easement to the north and 92 acres of Town of Alton land on the south, thus we have a large band of protected open space in that area. The terms of the easement permit public pedestrian access to the brook and wetlands. Part of the mitigation package included restoration of the graveled-out area adjacent to the highway and creation of a small parking area for fisherman. We anticipate the restoration of this area will take place in 2006

We would like to extend our special thanks and appreciation to the Code Enforcement Secretary for her terrific support in taking minutes, maintaining our records, tracking Alton's many wetland applications and providing coordination with the Planning Board.

We invite anyone interested in serving on the Commission to attend our meetings. We currently have regular and alternate positions available.

Respectfully Submitted,

Justine Gengras, Co-chairman

Earl Bagley, Co-chairman

Roger Burgess

Tom Hoopes

David Lawrence